

The bottom line here is production royalties from Federal lands and waters are owed to the American people. For the last 6 years under the Bush administration, the oil and gas industry has been pampered by friends in high places.

Consider this: From 2002 to 2005, collections of oil and gas royalties from drilling rigs on public lands have fallen to an annual average of \$48 million—half the average, \$115 million, collected annually in the 20 years prior, despite increased production.

Consider this: Between 1998 and 2001, the Minerals Management Service, MMS, conducted over 540 audits per year. From 2002 through 2005, the average number of audits dropped to 393. And in 2006, MMS completed only 144 audits. That means that MMS reduced the number of oil and gas audits by 22 percent.

By comparison, The New York Times reported recently that the IRS has more than doubled the number of individual tax returns audited from 2000 to 2006, increasing from nearly 618,000 to nearly 1.3 million of us whom IRS decided to scrutinize.

So here we have oil and gas companies raking in profits and getting a wink and a nod when it comes to paying the royalties they owe, while the IRS knuckles down to squeeze every possible nickel and dime out of regular folks and hardworking families. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

From the earliest days of this administration when energy executives, or their representatives, gathered behind the curtains of executive privilege shrouding the Vice President's office, the energy policy of this Nation has been tilted against the regular folks most of us in this body represent. These huge, multinational firms would seem to be the least in need of coddling by and protection of our government, yet, the policies of this administration have sheltered them from "ponying up" their fair share of what is truly owed to the Federal Treasury. At a time when the oil and gas industry is reaping record profits, consumers at the pump are watching the price figures flip by at increasing speed as the quantity of gas they actually pour hums ever more slowly into the tank.

We have an opportunity here, in H.R. 2337, to make some real and positive changes—to even out the policies so slanted in favor of the oil company executives whose nameplates appear at Mr. CHENEY's energy bargaining table. We have the chance to restore some accountability to the system and improve the way the Federal Government manages its public energy resources.

H.R. 2337 will step up the number of audits performed each year and give the agency the teeth it has long needed to go after those companies that underpay the Treasury at the expense of the rest of us.

Madam Speaker, every year over Memorial Day weekend we have a tall tales contest in my home State of West Virginia. That event draws some of the biggest fibbers and spinners the Lord has seen fit to create. Having listened to the bizarre claims ricocheting around these halls in recent weeks, I look forward to next Memorial Day when I expect to see a string of oil and gas executives taking the stage to share their whoppers.

The winner of this time-honored contest, by the way, is awarded an enviable trophy—a golden shovel. What a nice—and appro-

priate—decoration for the walls of some mighty oil company CEO.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF LIVES LOST IN CYPRUS DURING THE TURKISH INVASION

HON. MIKE MCINTYRE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 19, 2007

Mr. MCINTYRE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in commemoration of the 33rd anniversary of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, which occurred on July 20, 1974. Many lost their lives and livelihoods as a result of that invasion. It is disappointing that 33 years later the island of Cyprus remains divided and contentious.

A United Nations Security Council resolution states "a Cyprus settlement must be based on a State of Cyprus with a single sovereignty and international personality and a single citizenship, with its independence and territorial integrity safeguarded and comprising two politically equal communities as described in the relevant Security Council resolutions, in a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation and that such a settlement must exclude union in whole or in part with any other country or any form of partition or secession." I look forward to the day when such a settlement is realized.

Cyprus has been a staunch ally of the United States. It has aided our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq by allowing the United States over-flight and landing rights, as well as port access for our ships. In addition, Cyprus provided valuable assistance for our evacuation and rescue efforts after the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing and the 2006 hostilities in Lebanon.

Also, it is important that we ensure the protection of human rights in Cyprus and work to preserve the Cypriots' religious and cultural heritage. I am troubled by reports that religious sites, including Greek Orthodox churches, have been pillaged, destroyed, or in any way harmed.

I am encouraged that efforts are underway to facilitate the integration of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, specifically the opening of crossing points on this divided island. After 33 years of division and contention, it is time to reach a just and lasting peace that will unify Cyprus and allow it to grow politically, socially, and economically. I encourage my colleagues to support any efforts to reach such a settlement.

PEACE FOR GREEK AND TURKISH CYPRIOTS

HON. ED WHITFIELD

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 19, 2007

Mr. WHITFIELD. Madam Speaker, I rise today with the hope that the Island of Cyprus will soon be reunified, and with resolve of her citizens and the help from the international community, both the Greek and Turkish Cypriots will know tranquility.

Tragically, thirty-three years ago, violence and bloodshed ripped Cyprus apart, dividing

the island. Although it is peaceful today, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots are still separated to the detriment of many Turkish Cypriots, who have been deprived of economic and social advancements.

Unfortunately, decades of negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations and involving motherlands Greece and Turkey, have produced no lasting agreement. There was hope in April 2004 when the comprehensive, U.N.-sponsored "Annan Plan," was put to referendum. To the dismay of the international community, this plan failed when the Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly voted against it, despite the fact that the Turkish Cypriots overwhelmingly voted in favor of it.

After the unsuccessful adoption of the "Annan Plan," Turkish Cypriots called for action to discuss the situation. It was then that Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat and Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos met on July 3rd and 8th, 2006, and agreed to hold further meetings based on a "Set of Principles" aimed at the unification of Cyprus. The meeting of the two leaders and the agreement they reached have been welcomed by the international community, including the United States, the European Union and others.

It is important that this new and positive spirit demonstrated by the two Cypriot leaders be supported by the United States in order to help the parties build trust and forge an atmosphere conducive to progress and prosperity. It is our sincere hope that the spirit of reconciliation and goodwill generated in recent times will continue to be promoted by all parties involved.

Madam Speaker, as the process moves forward it is also important to recognize the resolve of the Turkish Cypriot people who have demonstrated time after time an unwavering commitment to reconciliation as well as remarkable flexibility by supporting the "Annan Plan." Despite their continued commitment to reunify Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots are still awaiting the fulfillment of the promises made to them by the international community that their isolation would be lifted. We believe that both the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, whose support was crucial in securing the "yes" vote of the Turkish Cypriots in the 2004 referendum, should be rewarded, not penalized, in order for the process to move forward toward a lasting settlement.

More than ever before, it is important to support a diplomatic compromise in Cyprus to ensure a bright future for Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

TRIBUTE TO DR. WILSON WEST

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 19, 2007

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the late Dr. Wilson West. Dr. West is a native of Belleville, IL, and was a well-known doctor and professor.

Dr. West was born near Centralia on September 13, 1913 and graduated from Salem High School. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. In 1937 he graduated from St. Louis University Medical School. Dr. West was a member of the St. Clair County Medical Society and served as its president in 1971. He